

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 09423 01 OF 02 141902Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
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O R 141753Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8309
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
USMISSION NATO
USEC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MADRID 9423

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SP
SUBJECT: SPAIN IN THE ADVENT OF THE REFERENDUM

1. DESPITE THE ACTS OF VIOLENT MEN AND THE PROSPECT OF
RAINY SKIES, PRIMIN SUAREZ AND THE KING CAN APPARENTLY
LOOK FORWARD TO A SUCCESSFUL REFERENDUM OUTCOME, I.E., HIGH ENOUGH
TO ESTABLISH AN UNQUESTIONABLE POPULAR MANDATE BUT NOT
SO HIGH AS TO RAISE THE SPECTRE OF MANIPULATION CHAR-
ACTERISTIC OF PLEBISCITES UNDER DICTATORIAL REGIMES.
SHOULD THIS BE THE CASE, IT WILL ESTABLISH THE LONG
SOUGHT LEGITIMACY TO MOVE SPAIN INTO A DEMOCRATIC
MONARCHY AND A PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM.

2. THE ORIOL KIDNAPPING HAS FRIGHTENED PEOPLE, EVEN
THOUGH OCCASIONAL ACTS OF VIOLENCE HAVE NOT BEEN UN-
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PAGE 02 MADRID 09423 01 OF 02 141902Z

COMMON DURING THE TRANSITION AND, IN FACT, WERE EVEN

MORE SALIENT IN THE LAST YEAR OF FRANCO'S REGIME. THE
DEFIANT APPEARANCE OF SANTIAGO CARILLO BEFORE THE PRESS
HAS RAISED QUESTIONS AMONG CONSERVATIVES, IRRITATED SOME
ELEMENTS OF THE MILITARY AND PLAYED INTO THE HANDS OF
THE EXTREME RIGHT WHO PUSH FOR A "NO" VOTE UNDER THE
SLOGAN "FRANCO WOULD HAVE VOTED 'NO'". BUT ONE HAS
TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE TROUBLES THESE EVENTS HAVE
CAUSED THE GOVERNMENT IN KEY SECTORS AND THE POTENTIAL
EFFECTS UPON THE ELECTORATE. CERTAINLY THE
"NO" VOTE (NEVER THOUGHT TO BE VERY LARGE), MAY WELL
INCREASE A BIT BECAUSE OF THE ABILITY OF THE RIGHT
TO USE THESE EVENTS IN SUPPORT OF THEIR CLAIM THAT
DEMOCRACY IS BAD FOR SPAIN. BUT THE GOVERNMENT'S SATURA-
TION CAMPAIGN IN FAVOR OF THE REFERENDUM THROUGH RADIO
AND TELEVISION AND THROUGH PLASTERING SPAIN WITH GEN-
ERALLY ATTRACTIVE AND INTELLIGENT POSTERS HAS APPAR-
ENTLY HAD ITS EFFECTS, STEADILY INCREASING (IF THE POLLS
ARE ANY MEASURE AT ALL), THE INTEREST OF THE AVERAGE
SPANIARD IN GOING TO THE POLLS AND IN VOTING FOR POLITICAL
REFORM. THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY QUESTION--NOR IS
THERE NOW--THAT THE REFORM BILL WILL PASS. ONLY THE
MARGINS IN RESPECT OF ABSTENTIONS AND IN RESPECT OF
THE "YES" VOTE ARE AT ISSUE.

3. UP TO THE WEEKENDS EVENTS, THESE MARGINS (GENERALLY
GIVEN AT 70-80 PERCENT PARTICIPATION AND 80-85PERCENT "YES" VOTE)
GRANTED NECESSARY POPULAR MANDATE (THE SUPPORT OF
56 TO 64 PERCENT OF ALL THOSE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE);
THE GOS, PERHAPS GLANCING BACKWARDS AT THE
MARGINS OF FRANCO'S PLEBICITES, WOULD OBVIOUSLY PREFER
THE MARGIN TO BE ON THE HIGH SIDE. THOUGH THE CARILLO
APPEARANCE AND THE ORIOL KIDNAPPING, BU
PLAYING ON THE FEARS OF WAVERING CONSERVATIVES, MAY IN-
CREASE THE "NO" VOTE, IT IS THE JUDGMENT OF
MOST POLITICAL OBSERVERS THAT IT WILL ALSO DECREASE
THE LEVEL OF ABSTENTIONS, SINCE SOME OF THE MODERATE
OPPOSITION GROUPS (E.G. SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND THE
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS OF GIL ROBLES) HAVE NOW EXPLICITLY
OR IMPLICITLY COME OUT IN FAVOR OF THE REFERENDUM,
EVEN THOUGH EARLIER THEY MADE ABSTENTIONIST NOISES
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PAGE 03 MADRID 09423 01 OF 02 141902Z

FOR OPTICAL REASONS. AS ONE OF SPAIN'S MORE
ASTUTE POLITICAL OBSERVERS, LUIS APOSTUA, PUT IT TO
AN EMBOFF, THE KIDNAPPING BRUTALIZED THE CAMPAIGN
AND MADE MODERATE OPPOSITIONISTS WHO HAD FLIRTED WITH
AN ABSTENTIONIST POSTURE REALIZE THAT IF THE GOVERN-
MENT'S MANDATE WERE PUT AT HAZARD THEN THE END RESULT
WOULD NOT BE SOMETHING BETTER BUT SOMETHING WORSE.
HE INDICATED HE HAD HEARD THESE SENTIMENTS FROM

PEOPLE AS FAR LEFT AS THE SOCIALISTS (PSOE).
ADDITIONALLY, AN ABSTENTIONIST CAMPAIGN IS NOT A
SIMPLE, EASILY UNDERSTOOD PROPOSITION FOR THE AVERAGE
VOTER, ALTHOUGH IT WAS DESIGNED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF
THE EXISTENCE IN ANY ELECTION OF NUMBERS OF PEOPLE
WHO ARE EITHER INFIRM OR INDOLENT AND DO NOT GO TO
THE POLLS.

4. AT ALL EVENTS, THE TURN-OUT, AS A RULE, WILL BE
LOWER IN MAJOR INDUSTRIALIZED CITIES AND HIGHER IN
THE MIDDLE SIZED CITIES, TOWNS AND COUNTRY-SIDE, WHERE
THE IDEA OF VOTING WILL BE SEEN AS AN OBLIGATION.
THE BASQUE PROVINCES OF GUIPUZCOA AND VIZCAYA (BILBOA)
WILL PROBABLY SHOW THE LOWEST TURN OUT. SOME ESTIMATE
THE TURN-OUT IN THESE TWO PROVINCES TO BE IN
THE 40 PERCENT RANGE.) IN CATALUNYA, ALSO TROUBLED BY REGIONAL
ISSUES, THE TURN-OUT WILL BE HIGHER (THE CONSENSUS
SEEMS TO INDICATE IN THE LOW 60'S) BUT WILL NOT REACH
THE PROJECTED NATIONAL AVERAGE. EVEN THOUGH SUAREZ HAD
TO ABANDON HIS TRIP TO CATALUNYA BECAUSE OF THE ORIOL
KIDNAPPING, WE EXPECT THAT HIS GESTURES IN OPENING THE
DIALOGUE WITH SIGNIFICANT BARCELONA POLITICAL LEADERS
WILL HAVE SOME EFFECT SINCE THE RESPONSE THERE OF ALL
BUT THE EXTREME LEFT HAS BEEN TO "FOLLOW YOUR CON-
SCIENCE," AN IMPLICIT ENDORSEMENT OF THE REFERENDUM.

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PAGE 01 MADRID 09423 02 OF 02 141914Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MADRID 9423

5. SPAIN HAS COME A LONG WAY SINCE FRANCO'S DEATH -
BED AGONY, BUT THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIC REFORM -
DESPITE THE PITFALLS PAST AND THE ONES THAT LIE
AHEAD - HAS GENERATED POPULAR MOMENTUM AS WELL AS
ENGENDERED A POLITICAL DYNAMIC. THAT MOMENTUM SHOULD
ENSURE THE NECESSARY POPULAR MANDATE TO PUSH AHEAD,
EVEN THOUGH VIOLENCE-PRONE EXTREMISTS, THE ISSUE OF
MILITARY ATTITUDES, THE PROBLEM OF POLICE BEHAVIOR,
AND THE OPPORTUNIST ATTITUDE OF THE PCE AND THE ISSUE
OF ITS LEGALIZATION WILL CONTINUE TO POSE SIGNIFICANT
DIFFICULTIES. GIVEN A REFERENDUM OUTCOME THAT GRANTS
LEGITIMACY TO THE NEW SYSTEM, THE FOCUS WILL SHIFT TO
THE CRUCIAL ISSUE OF HOW TO STRUCTURE THE ELECTORAL PROCESS
FOR THE NEW CORTES. GIVEN A DECENT MANDATE, SUAREZ SHOULD FIND
IT POSSIBLE TO NAVIGATE SUCCESSFULLY THROUGH THE NEGOTIA-
TIONS WITH BOTH THE TRADITIONAL OPPOSITION AND THE FRAGA
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PAGE 02 MADRID 09423 02 OF 02 141914Z

LED ALIANZA POPULAR ON THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. SHOULD THE OUTCOME FALL BELOW
PROJECTED LEVELS SO THAT THE PERCENTAGE OF THE ELIGIBLE
VOTERS SUPPORTING THE REFERENDUM DROPS TO AROUND 50 PERCENT,
WITH THE REST STAYING HOME OR VOTING "NO" OR IN BLANK,
THIS WOULD BE A STIMULUS TO PRESSURES AGAINST THE
POLITICAL PROCESS AND TO THE RECRUDESCENCE OF POTENTIALLY
SERIOUS TROUBLE FOR IT. SUAREZ, IN A LONG-PLANNED
APPEARANCE, WILL GO ON NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO
TONIGHT TO GIVE THE REFERENDUM A LAST BOOST. HE
WILL SEEK TO TRADE UPON HIS POPULARITY, WHICH HAD
GROWN OF LATE, AND HIS PERSUASIVE SKILLS TO PUSH,
AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE IDEA THAT A VOTE FOR THE REFORM
BILL IS A VOTE AGAINST EXTREMISM AND GREATER VIOLENCE.
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